

American Samoa Longline Fishery

Fishing gear type: Longline/set line

Current category: Category II*

Basis for current classification on the LOF: Based on analogy with Category II HI shallow-set and Category I deep-set longline fisheries. The fishing gear and methods used are similar. Also, there were three interactions with marine mammals in 2008, two false killer whales (stock unknown), one of which was a mortality, and a rough-toothed dolphin (stock unknown).

Current list of marine mammal species/stocks injured/killed: False killer whales, American Samoa; rough-toothed dolphins, American Samoa.

Estimated number of current participants: 60 permits in the limited entry program, with approximately 28 vessels in recent years.

Take Reduction Teams/Plans that affect this fishery: None.

Year added to the LOF: 2006

Category when originally listed: Category III

Basis for original classification on the LOF: There were no documented marine mammal injuries or mortalities in this fishery. However, NMFS initiated an observer program for this fishery in early 2006 to gather data to reevaluate this fishery's classification.

Estimated number of participants when originally listed: 138

Past names, if any: None.

Gear description/method for fishing: This fishery uses longline gear. Vessels over 50 ft (15.2 m) may set 1,500 - 2,500 hooks and have a greater fishing range and capacity for storing fish (8 - 40 metric tons). The fleet reached a peak of 66 vessels in 2001, and set a peak of almost 7,000 sets in 2002. Unlike the shallow-set fishery, the deep-set does not have regulations regarding the time of day that the gear may be set. However, it is more common for fishermen to set their gear in the day and haul in the afternoon, mainly to improve their catch rates.

Target species: Albacore tuna. Also, skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye tuna, wahoo, sharks, billfish, and other miscellaneous pelagic species are caught, with most of the sharks and billfish released.

Spatial/temporal distribution of effort: Waters surrounding American Samoa year-round.

Levels of observer coverage each year[†]: Observers were first placed on American Samoa longline vessels in April 2006 to monitor protected species interactions, with observer coverage averaging approximately 6–8% each year.

Management and regulations: This fishery is a limited entry fishery for pelagic longline vessels in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) around American Samoa. In 2000, the fishery began to expand rapidly with the influx of large (more than 50 ft (15.2 m) overall length) conventional mono-hull vessels, similar to the type used in the Hawaii-based longline fisheries. Regulations implemented in 2002 prohibit any large U.S. vessels (50 ft (15.2

* The fishery is classified by analogy to other gear types or fisheries that are known to cause mortality or serious injury of marine mammals.

[†] Observer coverage levels include the latest information reported in the most current final Stock Assessment Reports (SAR).

m) and longer) from fishing within 50 nmi around the islands of American Samoa. In 2005, the rapid expansion of longline fishing effort within the U.S. EEZ waters around American Samoa prompted the implementation of a limited entry system. Under the limited access program, NMFS issued a total of 60 initial longline limited entry permits in 2005 to qualified candidates, spread among 4 vessel size classes: 22 permits issued in Class A (less than or equal to 40 ft (12.2 m) length); 5 in Class B (40–50 ft (12.2–15.2 m)); 12 in Class C (50.1– 70 ft (15.2–21.3 m)); and 21 in Class D (more than 70 ft (21.3 m)). The number of active vessels has shifted to large vessels (Class C and D), with only a couple of small vessels active in the past two years. Permits may be transferred and renewed. Under the limited entry program, vessel operators must submit federal catch and effort logbooks, vessels over 40 ft (12.2 m) must carry observers if requested by NMFS, and vessels over 50 ft (15.2 m) must have an operational vessel monitoring system (VMS). In addition, vessel owners and operators must attend a protected species workshop annually, carry and use dip nets, line clippers, and bolt cutters, and follow handling, resuscitation, and release requirements for incidentally hooked or entangled sea turtles.

History of Changes on the LOF

2011 LOF:

- Changed the name of the stock of false killer whales on the list of species/stocks killed/injured from “stock unknown” to “American Samoa.” This stock is newly defined in the 2010 SAR. Two false killer whales were killed or seriously injured by the fishery in 2008, resulting in an average mortality and serious injury rate of 7.8 whales per year for the period 2006-2008, with approximately 8% observer coverage. No abundance estimates are available for this stock; therefore, a PBR level cannot be calculated and the serious injuries or mortalities of these animals cannot be compared against the PBR of this stock.
- Added rough-toothed dolphin (American Samoa stock) to the list of species/stocks killed/injured in the Category II “American Samoa longline” fishery. This stock is newly defined in the 2010 SAR. One rough-toothed dolphin was seriously injured by the fishery in 2008, resulting in an average mortality and serious injury rate of 3.6 dolphins per year for the period 2006-2008, with approximately 8% observer coverage. No abundance estimates are available for this stock; therefore, a PBR level cannot be calculated and the serious injury of this animal cannot be compared to the PBR of this stock

2010 LOF:

- Elevated to Category II based on analogy with Category II HI shallow-set and Category I deep-set longline fisheries. The fishing gear and methods used are similar. Also, there were three interactions with marine mammals in 2008, two false killer whales (stock unknown), one of which was a mortality, and a rough-toothed dolphin (stock unknown).
- Added false killer whales (stock unknown) to the list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery. A false killer whale was observed killed in this fishery in 2008. At the time of publication, an injury determination on the live-released false killer whale and Risso’s dolphin had not yet been incorporated into the SARs. A mortality does not need to be analyzed further to make an injury determination.

2007 LOF: Estimated number of participants was updated from 138 to 60.